

THE AFRICAN MINERS' STRIKE OF 1946 ⁽¹⁾

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Written in 1976

"Two hundred thousand subterranean heroes who, by day and by night, for a mere pittance lay down their lives to the familiar 'fall of rock' and who, at deep levels, ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 feet in the bowels of the earth, sacrifice their lungs to the rock dust which develops miners' phthisis and pneumonia."

- Sol Plaatjie, first Secretary of the African National Congress, describing the lives of black miners in 1914

Thirty years ago, on August 12, 1946, the African mine workers of the Witwatersrand came out on strike in support of a demand for higher wages - 10 shillings a day. They continued the strike for a week in the face of the most savage police terror, in which officially 1,248 workers were wounded and a very large number - officially only 9 - were killed. Lawless police and army violence smashed the strike. The resources of the racist State were mobilised, almost on a war footing, against the unarmed workmen.

But the miners' strike had profound repercussions which are felt until this day. The intense persecution of workers' organisations which began during the strike, when trade union and political offices and homes of officials were raided throughout the country, has not ceased.

The most profound result of the strike, however, was to be the impact it had on the political thinking within the national liberation movement; almost immediately it shifted significantly from a policy of concession to more dynamic and militant forms of struggle.

Birth of the African Mine Workers' Union

Black workers were introduced to trade unionism by the early struggles of white British workers who had begun to form trade unions from 1880 onwards. During

the first thirty years of their existence the white workers were occupied in a turbulent struggle for decent wages, union recognition and survival.

Writing about this period Alex Hepple states:

"It was a struggle of white men, striving for a higher standard of life and imbued with a fiery belief in their cause which carried them into bloody strikes, violence and rebellion. Their main enemy was the Chamber of Mines, a body of men who owned the rich gold mines. The quarrel revolved around the Chamber's low-wage policy. This conflict greatly influenced the pattern and direction of trade unionism in South Africa. It introduced the race factor into labour economics and steered white workers into support of an industrial colour bar, with all its damaging effects on workers' solidarity."

Indeed solidarity between white and black workers was lost in those first thirty years, never to be regained to this day. The result has been that the white workers became the aristocrats of labour in South Africa, being among the highest paid workers in the world, while their black compatriots are, in the main, still living below the breadline. What is worse, the overwhelming majority of white workers in South Africa became the main and the most vociferous supporters of successive racist regimes.

However, they taught the black workers one important lesson, i.e., in order to win their demands they had to organise. The organisation of African mine workers was and remains one of the most difficult - and the most essential - tasks facing the trade union and national movement in South Africa. Recruited from the four corners of the country and beyond its borders in Malawi, Lesotho, Botswana, Swaziland, Mozambique and, up to 1973, Angola, the African miners are spread out from Randfontein to Springs in the Witwatersrand, spilling over into the Orange Free State.

They are shut into prison-like compounds, speaking many languages, guarded and spied upon.

Any attempt at organisation exposed them to the wiles of employers, the antagonism of white workers and the ferocious arm of the law.

Many unsuccessful attempts were made to form a trade union prior to 1941. But in that year, on 3 August, a very representative miners' conference was called by the Transvaal Provincial Committee of the African National Congress. The conference was attended not only by workers from many mines, but also by delegates from a large number of African, Indian, Coloured and white organisations, as well as

representatives from a number of black unions. Some white unions gave their moral support and even the Paramount Chief of Zululand sent an encouraging message. A broad committee of fifteen was elected to "proceed by every means it thought fit to build up an African Mine Workers' Union in order to raise the standards and guard the interests of all African mine workers." (3)

From the first the committee encountered innumerable obstacles. The miners were ready to listen to its speakers, but the employers and the authorities were determined to prevent organisational meetings. Speakers were arrested and meetings broken up.

Another serious obstacle was the wide-scale use of spies by the mine owners.

Time and again provisional shaft and compound union committees were established, only to end in the victimisation and expulsion from the mines of the officials and committee members. Nevertheless, the organising campaign progressed steadily and the stage was reached where a very representative conference of mine workers was held. The Conference formally established the African Mine Workers' Union and elected a committee under the presidency of J. B. Marks, who soon thereafter was elected President of the Transvaal African National Congress as well.

Background to the strike

In 1941, when the decision to launch the Mine Workers' Union was first mooted the wage rate for African workers was R70 per year while white workers received R848. In 1946, the year of the great strike the wages were: Africans R87 and whites R1,106. (4)

In both cases it would be noticed that the wage gap between the white worker and the black worker was 12:1.

With the formal establishment of the Union, organisational work began in earnest in the face of increased harassment, arrests, dismissals, and deportation of workers by the police and the mine management. Nevertheless, the Union grew in strength and influence. The Chamber of Mines, however, refused even to acknowledge the existence of the African Mine Workers' Union, much less to negotiate with its representatives. The Chamber's secretary instructed the office staff not to reply to communications from the Union. (5)

Unofficially, of course, the Chamber was acutely conscious of the Union's activities and secret directives were sent out to break the Union. But, with the rising cost of

living, starvation of families in the reserves and increasing pressure by the mine management and white workers, the demands of the workers became more incessant.

In order to stave off the growing unrest among the African mine workers, the regime appointed a Commission of Enquiry in 1943, with Judge Lansdowne as its Chairman. Among the members of this Commission was A. A. Moore, President of the mostly white Trades and Labour Council.

The African Mine Workers' Union presented an unanswerable case before this Commission in support of the workers' claim to a living wage. The Chamber of Mines made no serious attempt to rebut the Union's case, reiterating that its policy was to employ cheap African labour.

Meanwhile, however, the *Guardian*, a progressive South African weekly, the only paper which totally supported the strike, was sued by four mining companies for 40,000 pounds for publishing the Unions memorandum on the grounds that it was false and that the recruiting of mine labourers would be hindered. The Court decided against the *Guardian* and awarded 750 pounds damages to each of the four companies. No serious student of South African politics could have expected otherwise. It was surprising that the awards to the mine magnates were not higher.

The report of the Lansdowne Commission which appeared in April 1944 was a shameful document. It accepted the basic premise of the mine owners; all its recommendations were quite frankly made within the framework of preserving the cheap labour system. The miner's wage, said the Commission, was not really intended to be a living wage, but merely a "supplementary income". Supplementary, that is, to the worker's supposed income from his land. The evidence placed before the Commission of acute starvation in the Transkei and other reserves was ignored.

The report of the Commission was received with bitter disappointment by the workers. Even its wretchedly miserly recommendations were rejected, in the main, by both the regime and the mine owners.

The recommendations were:

- an increase of five pence per shift for surface workers and six pence per shift for underground workers, on the basic rate of 22 pence per shift obtained for nearly a generation;
- cost of living allowance of 3 pence per shift;
- boot allowance of 36 pence for 30 shifts;

- two weeks` paid leave per annum for permanent workers; and
- overtime wages at time and a half.

Towards the end of that year the racist Prime Minister, Field Marshal Smuts, announced that wages were to be raised by 4 pence for surface and 5 pence for underground workers, and that the extra wage would be borne by the State in the form of tax remission to the mines. The Chamber of Mines also agreed to overtime pay. All the other recommendations, miserly though they were, were completely ignored.

Obviously expecting that this would do little to allay the general discontent among the African miners, Smuts issued a Proclamation - War Measure No. 1425 - prohibiting gatherings of more than twenty persons on mining property without special permission. J. B. Marks, the President, and two other officials of the Union were arrested in December 1944, when they held a meeting at the Durban Deep Compound on the Witwatersrand. A few days later P. Vundi and W. Kanye, two organisers of the Union, were arrested on a similar charge in Springs. The arrested men were found not guilty on a technicality. The offence created by the Proclamation was that of being present at a gathering of more than 20 persons, whereas the accused had been charged with "holding a meeting". From that time, the police were more careful to frame their charges in correct legal phraseology and all trade union meetings in or near mine compounds ceased. Though the war ended, the Proclamation was not withdrawn.

Despite these difficulties the African Mine Workers` Union increased its following in numerous mines throughout the Witwatersrand. And on May 19, 1946, the biggest conference yet held of representatives of the workers instructed the Executive of the Union to make yet one more approach to the Chamber of Mines to place before them the workers` demands for a ten shillings (one Rand) a day wage and other improvements. Failing agreement, decided the Conference, the workers would take strike action.

From May till July the Union redoubled its efforts to get the Chamber to see reason. To all their repeated communications they received one reply - a printed postcard stating that the matter was receiving attention.

In his evidence at the subsequent trial of strike leaders and their supporters, Mr. Limebeer, secretary of the Chamber of Mines, said that the postcard had been sent in error. It was the Chamber`s policy, he added, not to acknowledge communications from the Union.

Decision to strike

On Sunday, August 4, 1946, over one thousand delegates assembled at an open air conference held in the Newtown Market Square: no hall where Africans could hold meetings was big enough to accommodate those present. The conference carried the following resolution unanimously:

"Because of the intransigent attitude of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines towards the legitimate demands of the workers for a minimum wage of 10 shillings per day and better conditions of work, this meeting of African miners resolves to embark upon a general strike of all Africans employed on the gold mines, as from August 12, 1946."

Before the decision was adopted, speaker after speaker mounted the platform and demanded immediate action. One worker said:

"When I think of how we left our homes in the reserves, our children naked and starving, we have nothing more to say. Every man must agree to strike on 12 August. It is better to die than go back with empty hands."(6)

After the decision to strike was adopted, the President, J. B. Marks, stressed the gravity of the strike decision and said that the workers must be prepared for repression by possible violence. "You are challenging the very basis of the cheap labour system" he told them, "and must be ready to sacrifice in the struggle for the right to live as human beings." His speech was loudly cheered, as was that of the Secretary, J. J. Najoro, who declared that their repeated efforts to secure improvements by negotiation had always ended in failure, owing to the refusal of the Chamber of Mines to recognise the existence of the Union. There was little doubt, he warned, that the regime would attempt to suppress the strike by brute force.(7)

But the meeting was in a militant mood. An old miner shouted: "We on the mines are dead men already."(8)

The strike and the terror

A letter conveying the decision of the meeting to the Chamber, and adding a desperate last-minute appeal for negotiations, was as usual ignored. The press and mass media, except the *Guardian*, did not print any news of the decision until the morning of Monday, 12 August, when the *Rand Daily Mail* came out with a front page story that the strike was a "complete failure". The report was obviously

mischievous and a lie, as the paper went to bed before midnight, when the strike had not even begun.

The *Star* that evening, however, had a different tale to tell: tens of thousands of workers were out on strike from the East to the West Rand; the Smuts regime had formed a special committee of Cabinet Ministers to "deal with" the situation; and thousands of police were being mobilised and drafted to the area.

They dealt with it by means of bloody violence. The police batoned, bayoneted and fired on the striking workers to force them down the mine shafts. The full extent of police repression is not known but reports from miners and some newspapers reveal intense persecution and terror during the week following Monday, 12 August.

A peaceful procession of workers began to march to Johannesburg on what became known as Bloody Tuesday, 13 August, from the East Rand. They wanted to get their passes and go back home. Police opened fire on the procession and a number of workers were killed. At one mine workers, forced to go down the mine, started a sit-down strike underground. The police drove the workers up - according to the *Star* - "stope by stope, level by level" to the surface. They then started beating them up, chasing them into the veld with baton charges. Then the workers were "re-assembled" in the compound yard and, said the *Star*, "volunteered to go back to work".

In protest against these savage brutalities, a special conference of the Transvaal Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CONETU) decided to call a general strike in Johannesburg on Wednesday, 14 August. The Johannesburg City Council sent a deputation to plead with CONETU to maintain essential services. Many workers heeded the call, but the weakness of the unions generally, and the failure to bring the call home to the workers in factories, resulted in only a partial success of the strike.

CONETU called a mass meeting of workers at the Newtown Market Square on 15 August. The meeting was banned in terms of the Riotous Assemblies Act, and the decision banning the meeting was conveyed by a senior police officer, backed by a large squad of armed police. Those present were given five minutes to disperse. Only quick action by people's leaders who went among the angry crowd averted a massacre. A procession of women tobacco workers marching to this meeting was attacked by the police and one pregnant worker bayoneted.

By Friday, 16 August, all the striking workers - 75,000 according to the government "Director of Native Labour" but probably nearer 100,000 - were bludgeoned back to work.

Throughout the week hundreds of workers were arrested, tried, imprisoned or deported. Leaders of the African trade unions and the entire Executive Committee of the African Mine Workers` Union, the whole of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and scores of Provincial and local leaders of the African National Congress were arrested and charged in a series of abortive "treason and sedition" trials. Innumerable police raids, not only in the Transvaal but in all the main cities in the country including Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Kimberley and East London, were carried out on the offices of trade unions, the Congresses and the Communist Party. The homes of leaders of the ANC, the Communist Party, the Indian and Coloured Congresses and the trade unions were also raided simultaneously. The white South African State was mobilised and rampant in defence of its cheap labour policy and big dividends for the mining magnates and big business. This marked the opening of a phase of intense repression by the racist regime of the day, led by Field Marshal Smuts, against the forces for change in South Africa. This repression continues to this day under the Vorster regime.

The African Mine Workers` Union, mainly because of the very difficult circumstances under which it operated, was never a closely-organised well-knit body. During the strike the central strike committee was effectively cut off from the workers at each mine by massive police action and the workers had to struggle in isolation. They were continually told that all the other workers had gone back to work, and apart from Union leaflets hazardously brought into the compounds by gallant volunteers - a large number being caught and arrested - there was no system of interchanging information.

Nevertheless, thousand of miners defied terror, arrest and enemy propaganda and stood out for five days - from 12 to 16 August. During the strike 32 of the 45 mines on the Rand were affected according to one report received by the Union and later confirmed by the Johannesburg *Star*. According to the estimates issued by the Chief Native Commissioner for the Witwatersrand, 21 mines were affected by the strike, 11 wholly and 10 partially. The dead, according to this official, numbered nine, of whom four were trampled to death, three died in the hospital, one was shot dead and one "killed himself by running into a dustbin".

The regime called the strike a failure. But no great movement of this character is really a "failure", even though it might not succeed in its immediate aim.

A historic event

The African miners' strike was one of those historic events that, in a flash of illumination, educate a nation, reveal what has been hidden and destroy lies and illusions. The strike transformed African politics overnight. It spelt the end of the compromising, concession-begging tendencies that dominated African politics. The timid opportunism and servile begging for favours disappeared for all practical purposes. The Native Representative Council which, in a sense, embodied that spirit, in its session on Thursday, 15 August, in Pretoria, decided to adjourn as a protest against the Government's "breach of faith towards the African people". They never met again.

Dr. A. B. Xuma, President-General of the African National Congress, joined a delegation of the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) sent to the 1946 session of the United Nations General Assembly when the question of the treatment of Indians in South Africa was raised by the Government of India. He, together with the SAIC representatives - H. A. Naidoo and Sorabjee Rustomjee - and Senator H. M. Basner, a progressive white "Native Representative" in the South African Senate, used the occasion to appraise Member States of the United Nations of the strike of the African miners and other aspects of the struggle for equality in South Africa.

Dealing with this visit the ANC, at its annual conference from December 14 to 17, 1946, passed the following resolution:

"Congress congratulates the delegates of India, China and the Soviet Union and all other countries who championed the cause of democratic rights for the oppressed non-European majority in South Africa, and pays tribute to those South Africans present in America, particularly Dr. A. B. Xuma, Messrs. H. A. Naidoo, Sorabjee Rustomjee and Senator H. M. Basner, for enabling delegates to the United Nations to obtain first-hand information and data which provided the nations of the world with reasonable grounds for passing a deserving judgment against the South African policy of white domination.

"Conference desires to make special mention of the Council for African Affairs for its noble efforts to defend fundamental human rights..."(9)

When the Native Representative Council adjourned, the Prime Minister, Field Marshal Smuts, met members of the Council and outlined new proposals to end the deadlock. Among his proposals was "a form of recognition" for African trade unions. However, he made it clear that such recognition would not include African mine workers: their affairs would be dealt with by an Inspectorate functioning under the Department of Native Affairs.

After considering this proposal, the Councillors stated:

"It is asking for too much to expect the African people to believe that this new Inspectorate, whatever the grade of officers appointed, will make a better job of protecting the interests of the mine workers than the Inspectorate has done in the past. The African mine workers demand the right to protect themselves through the medium of their own recognised and registered organisations." (10)

In a statement on May 11, 1947, on the Council's decision to adjourn, Dr. A.B. Xuma reiterated the demand of the ANC for "recognition of African trade unions under the Industrial Conciliation Act and adequate wages for African workers, including mine workers". (11)

The brave miners of 1946 gave birth to the ANC Youth League's Programme of Action adopted in 1949; they were the forerunners of the freedom strikers of May 1, 1950, against the Suppression of Communism Act, and the tens of thousands who joined the 26 June nation-wide protest strike that followed the killing of sixteen people during the May Day strike. They gave the impetus for the 1952 Campaign of Defiance of Unjust Laws when thousands of African, Indian and Coloured people went to jail; they inspired the mood that led to the upsurge in 1960 and to the emergence of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation) - the military wing of the African National Congress.

(1) From "Notes and Documents", No. 21/76, September 1976

(2) Alex Hepple, *South Africa - A Political and Economic History*. London: Pall Mall Press, 1966.

(3) E. Roux, *Time Longer than Rope*. University of Wisconsin Press, p. 335.

(4) Annual Reports of the South African Government Mining Engineers

(5) "The Impending Strike of African Mine Workers", a statement by the African Mine Workers' Union, August 1946

(6) *Guardian*, Cape Town, August 9, 1946

(7) *Ibid.*

(8) *Ibid.*

(9) The Council on African Affairs, led by Paul Robeson, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois and Dr. Alpheus Hunton, American black leaders, greatly assisted the delegation during its visit.

(10) Gwendolyn Carter and Thomas Karis, *From Protest to Challenge*, Vol. II, p. 257. Stanford: Hoover University Press, 1973.

(11) *Ibid.* p. 258.

From: <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/misc/miners.html>

"The Three Doctors' Pact"



Naicker, Xuma and Dadoo

MARCH 9, 1947

"Joint Declaration of Cooperation" by Dr. A. B. Xuma, President of the African National Congress, Dr. G.M. Naicker, President of the Natal Indian Congress, and Dr. Y.M. Dadoo, President of the Transvaal Indian Congress, March 9, 1947

This Joint Meeting between the representatives of the African National Congress and the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses, having fully realised the urgency of cooperation between the non-European peoples and other democratic forces for the attainment of basic human rights and full citizenship for all sections of the South African people, has resolved that a Joint Declaration of Cooperation is imperative for the working out of a practical basis of cooperation between the national organisations of the Non-European peoples.

This Joint Meeting declares its sincerest conviction that for the future progress, goodwill, good race relations, and for the building of a united, greater and free South Africa, full franchise rights must be extended to all sections of the South African people, and to this end this Joint Meeting pledges the fullest cooperation between the African and Indian peoples and appeals to all democratic and freedom-loving citizens of South Africa to support fully and cooperate in this struggle for:

- Full franchise

- Equal economic and industrial rights and opportunities and the recognition of African trade unions under the Industrial Conciliation Act
- The removal of all land restrictions against non-Europeans and the provision of adequate housing facilities for all non-Europeans
- The extension of free and compulsory education to non-Europeans
- Guaranteeing freedom of movement and the abolition of Pass Laws against the African people and the provincial barriers against Indians
- And the removal of all discriminatory and oppressive legislations from the Union's statute book.

This Joint Meeting is therefore of the opinion that for the attainment of these objects it is urgently necessary that a vigorous campaign be immediately launched and that every effort be made to compel the Union Government to implement the United Nations' decisions and to treat the Non-European peoples in South Africa in conformity with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

This Joint Meeting further resolves to meet from time to time to implement this Declaration and to take active steps in proceeding with the campaign.

From: <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/congress/gm1947.html>

The Story of Defiance



Henry Nxumalo

Henry Nxumalo, Drum, Johannesburg, October 1952

On 6 April 1952, exactly 300 years after Van Riebeeck and the first white settlers landed at the Cape, the first mass demonstrations were held in Red Square, Fordsburg, Johannesburg (now called Freedom Square), and the other main centres of the Union. Units marched into Freedom Square from the locations and outlying towns. The meeting was addressed by the ANC and SAIC presidents, Dr Moroka and Dr Dadoo, and many other African, Indian and coloured leaders. They protested against the 'oppressive measures' and called for 10,000 volunteers to defy the laws.

The date fixed for the first defiance of the laws was 26 June, commemorating the protest strike by non-whites two years ago against living conditions. But the first actual cases of defiance, as it happened, occurred before that. On 10 May the government, under the Suppression of Communism Act, called on four 'named' non-white ex-communists to resign from all organisations: Dadoo, Marks, Bopape and Kotane. All four leaders were closely involved in the Defiance Campaign, and both Dadoo and Marks were members of the original Joint Planning Council.

The four leaders defied the order from the Minister of justice, and continued to address meetings. With others, they were each in turn arrested. On 9 June the 'named' non-white leaders who had defied the ban came before the Magistrate's Court in Johannesburg. The week of the trial - or 'Leaders Week', as it was called -

was the occasion for more protest, with crowds squeezing in and around the courts, and volunteers signing on in hundreds. All over the Union, in the towns and in the locations, the leaders made speeches for the campaign. The four principal banned leaders, together with the others, were found guilty. They were sentenced to between four and six months' imprisonment. They were granted leave to appeal and await a second trial.

In the meantime, volunteers were enlisted from all parts of the Union and from all the non-white groups to take part in acts of defiance. Men and women from all walks of life signed on, to be later organised into batches to defy the laws together.

On 26 June bands of volunteers went into- action for the first time. Without violence or disorder, a small group led by Nana Sita, an old-stager of passive resistance, insisted on entering Boksburg location, close to Johannesburg, without the necessary permits. After arguments with the police, they were arrested and, without resistance, entered the police lorry which took them to gaol. The first group was shortly followed by others, and Walter Sisulu, Secretary-General of the ANC, was one of the leaders arrested.

On the same evening a meeting was held at the Garment Workers' Hall in Anderson Street, Johannesburg. After the meeting, attended by picked bands of volunteers and a number of pressmen, a group of Africans left the building after the official curfew time. They came into the street to find a row of armed police lining the street on both sides. After brief questioning by the police chief, the group was arrested and, singing 'Afrika' and with thumbs uplifted to the 'Afrika' sign, they climbed into the waiting lorry. With them to the gaol went defiance leaders Yusuf Cachalia and Nelson Mandela.

The first groups of Defiers came up before the magistrate and were sentenced to periods from four to six weeks, with option of a fine. The fine was refused, and the Defiers served their full sentences. This was the pattern of all the defiance groups which followed. There was no violence, no resistance to arrest. The groups marched off and were taken to the gaol without incident.

Henry Nxumalo

From: http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/struggles/story_of_defiance.html

Call to the Congress of the People

Leaflet issued by the National Action Council of the Congress of the People, 1955

WE CALL THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA BLACK AND WHITE— LET US SPEAK TOGETHER OF FREEDOM!

WE CALL THE FARMERS OF THE RESERVES AND TRUST LANDS.

Let us speak of the wide land, and the narrow strips on which we toil.
Let us speak of brothers without land, and of children without schooling.
Let us speak of taxes and of cattle, and of famine.
LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.

WE CALL THE MINERS OF COAL, GOLD AND DIAMONDS.

Let us speak of the dark shafts, and the cold compounds far from our families.
Let us speak of heavy labour and long hours, and of men sent home to die.
Let us speak of rich masters and poor wages.
LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.

WE CALL THE WORKERS OF FARMS AND FORESTS.

Let us speak of the rich foods we grow, and the laws that keep us poor.
Let us speak of harsh treatment and of children and women forced to work.
Let us speak of private prisons, and beatings and of passes.
LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.

WE CALL THE WORKERS OF FACTORIES AND SHOPS.

Let us speak of the good things we make, and the bad conditions of our work.
Let us speak of the many passes and the few jobs.
Let us speak of foremen and of transport and of trade unions; of holidays and of houses.
LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.

WE CALL THE TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND THE PREACHERS.

Let us speak of the light that comes with learning, and the ways we are kept in darkness.
Let us speak of great services we can render, and of the narrow ways that are open to us.
Let us speak of laws, and government, and rights.
LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.

WE CALL THE HOUSEWIVES AND THE MOTHERS.

Let us speak of the fine children that we bear, and of their stunted lives.
Let us speak of the many illnesses and deaths, and of the few clinics and schools.
Let us speak of high prices and of shanty towns.
LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.

LET US SPEAK TOGETHER

ALL OF US TOGETHER—African and European, Indian and Coloured.
Voter and voteless. Privileged and rightless. The happy and the homeless.
All the people of South Africa; of the towns and of the countryside.

LET US SPEAK TOGETHER OF FREEDOM. And of the
happiness that can come to men and women if they live in a land that is free.

*LET US SPEAK TOGETHER OF FREEDOM. And of how to get it for ourselves, and for
our children.*

LET THE VOICE OF ALL THE PEOPLE BE HEARD. AND LET THE DEMANDS OF ALL THE
PEOPLE FOR THE THINGS THAT WILL MAKE US FREE BE RECORDED. LET THE
DEMANDS BE GATHERED TOGETHER IN A GREAT **CHARTER OF FREEDOM.**

WE CALL ON ALL GOOD MEN AND TRUE, to speak now of freedom, and to write
their own demands into the Charter of Freedom.

WE CALL ALL WHO LOVE LIBERTY to pledge their lives from here on to win the
Freedoms set out in the Charter.

WE CALL ALL THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA TO PREPARE FOR:

THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE—Where representatives of the people, everywhere
in the land, will meet together in a great assembly, to discuss and adopt the Charter
of Freedom.

*Let us organise together for the Congress of the People.
Let us speak together of Freedom.
Let us work together for the Freedom Charter.*

LET US GO FORWARD TOGETHER TO FREEDOM!

This Call to the

CONGRESS of the PEOPLE

is addressed to all South Africans, European and Non-European.

It is made by four bodies, speaking for the four sections of the people of South Africa:—by the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the Congress of Democrats, and the South African Coloured People's Organisation.

It calls you all to prepare to send your chosen spokesmen to:

THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE,

a meeting of elected representatives of all races, coming together from every town and village, every farm and factory, every mine and kraal, every street and suburb, in the whole land. Here all will speak together, freely, as equals. They will speak together of the things their people need to make them free. They will speak together of changes that must be made in our lives, our laws, our customs and our outlooks. They will speak together of freedom. And they will write their demands into

THE FREEDOM CHARTER.

This Charter will express all the demands of all the people for the good life that they seek for themselves and their children. The Freedom Charter will be our guide to those "singing tomorrows" when all South Africans will live and work together, without racial bitterness and fear of misery, in peace and harmony.

THIS IS A CALL for an awakening of all men and women, to campaign together in the greatest movement of all our history.

Our call is to you—the People of South Africa. We invite all Unionwide Organisations to join as sponsors of the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE, and to take part in its direction. Those who are not afraid to hear the

voice of the people will join us. We will welcome them, and work together with them as equals.

We invite all local and provincial societies, clubs, churches, trade unions, sporting bodies and other organisations to join as partners in the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE Committee, and to share the work. Those who are not afraid to speak of freedom will join us. We will welcome them, and work together with them as equals.

We invite all South African men and women of every race and creed to take part as organisers of the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE and awaken others to its message. Those who are prepared to work together for freedom and the Freedom Charter will join us. We will welcome them, and go forward together with them to freedom.

OUR CALL IS TO YOU!

- **Give your time to spread the message of the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE.**
- **Become a Volunteer to organise for freedom.**
- **Tell your neighbours and workmates of the nation-wide elections that are coming.**
- **Rouse the people to discuss what they want of freedom.**

LET US WORK TOGETHER FOR FREEDOM!

THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE

will take place

- when all the people's demands for inclusion in the Freedom Charter have been gathered in;
- when the whole country has been awakened to speak of freedom,
- and the call for elections has been made;
- not later than June, 1955—at a date and place still to be announced.

THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE

will be organised

- by 50,000 Volunteers, who will give their time to carrying through the campaign as directed;
- by a network of committees in every village, town and factory, representing and uniting all sections and all races.

- by the National Action Council, composed of all national bodies that agree to act as sponsors.

DO THESE THREE THINGS-NOW!

ONE: SEND IN YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS TO A PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE OF THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE, stating that you are interested and would like to assist.

Transvaal Committee, Box 11045, Johannesburg.

Natal Committee, Box 2299, Durban.

Western Cape Committee, Box 4552, Cape Town.

Eastern Cape Committee, Box 1294, Port Elizabeth.

O.F.S. Committee, 3397 Masito Street, Bloemfontein.

TWO: FORM COMMITTEES to campaign for the Congress of the People.

THREE: GATHER GROUPS to send in their demands for the Freedom Charter.

*

DO NOT THROW THIS LEAFLET AWAY! PASS IT ON TO A FRIEND.DISCUSS IT WITH OTHERS. SEE THAT IT IS READ BY MANY PEOPLE.

The Freedom Charter

Adopted at the Congress of the People, Kliptown, on 26 June 1955

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:

that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;

that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;

that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;

that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

And therefore, we, the people of South Africa, black and white together equals, countrymen and brothers adopt this Freedom Charter;

And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes here set out have been won.

The People Shall Govern!

Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and to stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws;

All people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country;

The rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour or sex;

All bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government .

All National Groups Shall have Equal Rights!

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races;

All people shall have equal right to use their own languages, and to develop their own folk culture and customs;

All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride;

The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime;

All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.

The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole;

All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the wellbeing of the people;

All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.

The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It!

Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it to banish famine and land hunger;

The state shall help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers;

Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land;

All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;

People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.

All Shall be Equal Before the Law!

No-one shall be imprisoned, deported or restricted without a fair trial; No-one shall be condemned by the order of any Government official;

The courts shall be representative of all the people;

Imprisonment shall be only for serious crimes against the people, and shall aim at re-education, not vengeance;

The police force and army shall be open to all on an equal basis and shall be the helpers and protectors of the people;

All laws which discriminate on grounds of race, colour or belief shall be repealed.

All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!

The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organise, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children;

The privacy of the house from police raids shall be protected by law;

All shall be free to travel without restriction from countryside to town, from province to province, and from South Africa abroad;

Pass Laws, permits and all other laws restricting these freedoms shall be abolished.

There Shall be Work and Security!

All who work shall be free to form trade unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers;

The state shall recognise the right and duty of all to work, and to draw full unemployment benefits;

Men and women of all races shall receive equal pay for equal work;

There shall be a forty-hour working week, a national minimum wage, paid annual leave, and sick leave for all workers, and maternity leave on full pay for all working mothers;

Miners, domestic workers, farm workers and civil servants shall have the same rights as all others who work;

Child labour, compound labour, the tot system and contract labour shall be abolished.

The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!

The government shall discover, develop and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life;

All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands;

The aim of education shall be to teach the youth to love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace;

Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children; Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit;

Adult illiteracy shall be ended by a mass state education plan;

Teachers shall have all the rights of other citizens;

The colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished.

There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!

All people shall have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security;

Unused housing space to be made available to the people;

Rent and prices shall be lowered, food plentiful and no-one shall go hungry;

A preventive health scheme shall be run by the state;

Free medical care and hospitalisation shall be provided for all, with special care for mothers and young children;

Slums shall be demolished, and new suburbs built where all have transport, roads, lighting, playing fields, creches and social centres;

The aged, the orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state;

Rest, leisure and recreation shall be the right of all:

Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished, and laws which break up families shall be repealed.

There Shall be Peace and Friendship!

South Africa shall be a fully independent state which respects the rights and sovereignty of all nations;

South Africa shall strive to maintain world peace and the settlement of all international disputes by negotiation - not war;

Peace and friendship amongst all our people shall be secured by upholding the equal rights, opportunities and status of all;

The people of the protectorates Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland shall be free to decide for themselves their own future;

The right of all peoples of Africa to independence and self-government shall be recognised, and shall be the basis of close co-operation.

Let all people who love their people and their country now say, as we say here:

**THESE FREEDOMS WE WILL FIGHT FOR, SIDE BY SIDE, THROUGHOUT OUR
LIVES, UNTIL WE HAVE WON OUR LIBERTY**
